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IN MEADE'S CAMP
A DIARY OF THE CIVIL WAR
ROBERT MILLER HATFIELD

1864

Feb. 26. Left Brooklyn for a term of service in the Army of the Potomac at 6 o'clock A. M. Reached Philadelphia at 11 o'clock A. M., and went directly to the rooms of the Christian Commission, saw the President¹ and Secretary, and received directions as to our future proceedings.

Feb. 27. Left Baltimore 8:45, reaching Washington in two hours and went directly to the rooms of the Commission. Met here a Rev. T. P. Hunt, the famous temperance lecturer of other years, now chaplain of a Pennsylvania regiment. He is a most remarkable man, seventy years of age, but full of life and energy. He gave us a very interesting account of his labors in the army, with anecdotes illustrating his manner of dealing with officers and men. After he left a gentleman told us the following anecdote, which shows the kind of stuff the old man is made of. His colonel was horribly profane, and as other means failed to reform him Mr. Hunt kept an exact record of the oaths and profane expressions used by the colonel during a considerable period. At a convenient time, he asked the colonel to read the account that had been kept. He did so, and then said, "Chaplain, for God's sake rub out that record and I will never swear again." Brother McCabe ["Chaplain" (later, Bishop) C. C. McCabe] gave us an amusing account of an effort made by a zealous Baptist brother, whom he met in the street, to convert him to the true faith.

During our ride to and from Camp Stoneman, Brother McCabe gave us some very interesting accounts of what he saw and heard during his imprisonment at Richmond. His report satisfied me that our officers and soldiers are sustained under their sufferings by a spirit of patriotism that would do honor to the best names known in history. Soon after our men were incarcerated in the Richmond prisons

*In the early part of 1864, my father, Robert M. Hatfield, at that time pastor of the Fleet Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, went to Virginia to serve at the front under the Christian Commission, an agency maintained by voluntary contributions, which ministered to the spiritual needs of our soldiers. His companions were the Rev. Alfred Cookman of New York and the Rev. Wilbur F. Watkins of Brooklyn. The original diary, hastily written down in pencil while in camp, has been deciphered in the hope of preserving an interesting document of the Civil War.

JAMES TAFT HATFIELD.

¹George H. Stuart.

the rebels reported to them that the Union forces had been defeated at Gettysburg with a terrible slaughter and the loss of forty thousand prisoners. The effect on the officers in Libby prison was most distressing. At night, when they attempted, as was the custom, to sing the doxology, they were so much affected that most of them burst into tears, and the singing was concluded by only the few who were able to suppress their emotions. Brother McCabe said that for himself he never closed his eyes in sleep during the night. He, like his companions in suffering, felt that if the country was lost there was nothing left for which he desired to live.

Early on the following morning Uncle Ben, an old colored man who brought them the Richmond papers each day, was heard coming rapidly up the stairs. He threw the door open and exclaimed with a loud voice, "Great news in de papers dis morning by telegraph communication!" The papers were eagerly opened, and from them it was learned that the rebels were defeated, and Lee in retreat for the Potomac. The excitement among the Union prisoners became uncontrollable. They grasped each other by the hand, laughed and cried and rejoiced together. When McCabe was about to leave the prison one of the Union officers, who was worn and wasted with disease till he had the appearance of a walking skeleton, said to Mr. McCabe: "You are going North and may probably see the President. I am afraid that he may be so desirous of securing our release, or of mitigating our sufferings, as to make concessions to the rebels that are not honorable to the country. Tell him for me to stand firm and not yield an inch. We can die here, but cannot bear to have our country dishonored."

Sunday, Feb. 28. Preached this morning at Kendall Green to about fifty of the teamsters. They listened attentively and almost every man of them kneeled with me and when I prayed, but they belong to a rough, hard fraternity.

Feb. 29. Left Washington for the Army of the Potomac at a quarter to nine A. M. We rode for seventy miles through a country that recalled many of the most important events of the war. For miles and miles we rode past the localities that have been fought over and over by our armies, Alexand-

ria, Manassas, Bealeton, Catletts Station, Warrenton Junction, etc., are among the places that we passed. Much of the country bore marks of the ravages of war, and the carcasses of dead horses were strewed along the way.

We reached Brandy Station, the headquarters of the Christian Commission in the field, at 2:30 o'clock P. M. The Principal of the station was from home, and his subordinates were about as ill-bred a set as one would be likely to meet anywhere. We dined on the following bill of fare: 1 Ham Bone. Very little meat. 1 Basin of Rye Pudding, Bread and Molasses, all served on tin plates.

During the afternoon I went out and conversed with a number of the contrabands on religious subject. They seemed candid and quite willing to listen to what was said. In the evening we attended a meeting with them in the large kitchen of their quarters. The place was crowded, and they sang and prayed with real African fervor. On an invitation from Brother Cookman, five of their number knelt at a bench and asked an interest in our prayers.

March 1. The rain that commenced last evening lasted through the night, and continues this morning. We are now having our first experience of Virginia mud. All that has been said with regard to its detestable qualities now seems reasonable. It is not yet deep, but it is as soft as batter, and so abundant as to besmear and discolor everything. Wagons, horsemen, shoes, clothes, all are deeply, darkly, dreadfully red.

The army seems to be about the last place in which to learn anything of army operations. There are reports here of an advance movement of parts of the Army of the Potomac. Several thousands of Gregg's cavalry are said to have moved forward on Sunday evening at 11 o'clock, and crossed the Rapidan, driving in the enemy's pickets. This report seems probable from the fact that fifty rebel prisoners were brought to this station this morning and forwarded to Washington. They were a miserable, Godforsaken set in appearance; indeed, I saw but one of them who looked like a man of pluck and intelligence. Several of them wore the uniform of our troops, others were real gray-backs. There are re-

ports of the operations of Mosby in firing on pickets, etc., only a few miles from this station, in both directions, that is, at Culpeper and Warrenton. We saw a carrier of dispatches, last evening, who told us that he was twice shot at during the previous night. We also heard of two of our pickets who were brought in wounded.

March 2. The storm cleared off during the night, and the morning is delightful. Rode over to his headquarters and made a call on General Patrick. Found him a most pleasant and gentlemanly man and decidedly sharp withal. He is Provost Marshal of the Army of the Potomac, and seems to be the right man in the right place. Went afterward to call on General Meade. He received us politely, but did not impress me as a great man.

On our way we saw our troops on their return from the front, where they have been for two or three days. Their appearance was more warlike than anything I have before seen. After reaching Culpeper Court House another regiment or two passed through the streets on their return to their old quarters. They looked exceedingly worn and dirty.

March 3. Went out during the forenoon to find Wilbur F. Rossel. Went in the afternoon with Captains Cranford, McClure, and two gentlemen to Pony Mountain. Captain Paine, in charge of the station, pointed out to us the location of the several camps for miles and miles around. It was a splendid spectacle. The day was warm, and the atmosphere somewhat hazy, but looking through a powerful glass we were able to discern a rebel camp across the Rapidan. We also saw one of their signal stations eight miles distant, and Captain Paine informed us that he understood the message they were transmitting, and that he had a few days before forwarded to headquarters a message that the rebel General Stuart was sending to Lee.

March 4. I this morning took a supply of papers, books, and Testaments and walked out to the camp of the 2nd Wisconsin to commence my first regular work of visitation and distribution among the soldiers. On my way out I fell in with a soldier on guard, who asked me if I could spare him a paper. After supplying him I asked him if he was a Chris-

tian. He replied that he was trying to be, but found the army a hard place for a Christian. His comrades scoffed at him when he prayed in his tent, and in many ways discouraged him in his efforts to serve the Lord. I tried to encourage him to faithfulness, and during our conversation learned from him that he had been for a number of years in the English service. He knew Captain Hedley Vicars, and was with General Havelock at the time of his death. He spoke of the latter in most enthusiastic terms, especially of his character as a Christian.

I proceeded to call on the soldiers in their tents. In almost every case they seemed pleased to see me, and received what I gave them (advice included) in a good spirit. Many of them, more than one-half, I should say, admitted that they were the sons of praying mothers, all of them seemed frank and serious, but I cannot say that I found any who gave evidence of being penitent or concerned for the salvation of their souls.

March 5. This morning I visited the 19th Indiana and distributed Testaments and papers among them. I found opportunity to converse with a considerable number of the men. They were very respectful, and many of them were from Methodist families. In the afternoon I walked out of town, and took a look at the rebel burying-ground. It was a sad sight, long rows of graves marked only by pine boards containing the names of the dead with the date of their death. Most of them died young, and far from their homes. I saw more than one grave marked "*Unknown*, Died...." The whole scene impressed me as a touching illustration of the horrors of war.

Sunday, March 6. Preached this morning at the camp of the 7th Wisconsin, in the open air, to a congregation of perhaps one hundred and fifty. Several of the officers were present and the men gave good attention. Dined with Colonel Morrow, Chaplain Way, and one of the captains of the 24th Michigan, and their wives. Preached at 2 o'clock in the chapel of the 24th Michigan to more people than could be crowded into the building, say one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and fifty. General Rice, with his wife, and

quite a large number of other officers were present. Went to the tent of Brother Watkins, took tea with him, and preached in the evening to a tent full of as good looking men as I ever saw in a congregation (one hundred and twenty-five in number). Three went forward for prayers, and one of them literally "sought the Lord" with strong cries and tears.

March 7. The weather continues most beautiful. I think I have never been in so fine a climate as we have here in Old Virginia. The air is most delicious, and I do not take cold from exposure as at home. Visited an old colored man, "Uncle Abraham," now in the ninety-seventh year of his age. He is, without exception, the most extraordinary man I have ever met in my life. His intellectual faculties are unimpaired, and he spoke on several subjects with the wisdom of a philosopher. His memory was truly wonderful, not only with regard to remote events but with reference to those of recent occurrence. He informed us that he was born February 15, 1768, so that he was between eight and nine years of age at the time of the Declaration of American Independence. His life has been an eventful one.

He has been the husband of three wives, and the father of nineteen children. Two of his wives and eight of his children have been sold to slave traders and carried off and he has heard of them no more. In speaking of these events, he said: "It was dreadful, but we could do nothing. They were two strong for us! They cared no more for parting us than for separating dumb beasts." He has lived with his present wife fifty-three years, and has twice or thrice bought himself in order that they might remain together. When he was sixty-four years of age he was sold for between \$500 and \$600, and paid his master more than two-thirds of the purchase money. He then rented a small farm, bought him a horse, cow, pigs, etc., and for four years paid the rent and made money in a moderate way. At the end of this time he was sold with his little property to pay his master's debts. He went through substantially the same course again before obtaining his freedom.

He told us that he had often, after working all day for his master, worked all night in preparing pits and burning

charcoal for himself. His answers to the questions we proffered to him were striking, and such as evinced surprising intelligence. I said to him, "Uncle Abraham, what do you think of this war?" "Well," said he, "Them youngsters that I helped to raise came to me and said, 'What do you think of our new President?' and I said, 'I don't know as to that.' Den they said, 'We'll elect a President of our own, kill this new President, cut off his head, and bring you back a piece of his har.' I said, 'Massas, you knows bout dese things better than me, but see here, this President was elected by a minjority, and you's 'greed to bide by dat when Washington took his seat. Now if you just begin to fight, you'll find that a tangled hank, and this war wont end for maybe five or six years.' " We said, "Well, Uncle Abraham, how will this war end?" "I don't zactly know, but I obsarves this thing. Our folks said they was gwine up to your homes to whip you, but what I looks at is they can't stay in their own homes. They went up to your country and staid but a mighty little while, an' you comes down here and stays as long as you is a mind to."

I said, "Uncle Abraham, do you know that all your people are going to be free?" "I don't know about dat, I'se been in the world a long time; we knows what has been, but we don't know what will be. My father and mother was professors, and they used to tell me that the Bible said as that every man should eat his bread in the sweat of his face. Spose you makes the people free and puts em on a sand-knoll, where they can't make enough to pay their taxes. But I thinks this: Every man will then have a fair chance. We have had a bad chance in the world. We hain't been allowed any learning. There are sorry black men and sorry white men too." We gave the old couple some money, prayed with them, and left, followed by their prayers and blessings.

March 9. The morning is delightful. Heard the mockingbirds singing before I was out of bed. After breakfast took a horse, and accompanied by Elisha Dean and Brother Watkins went out for a long ride. On our way to the headquarters of General Birney fell in with a Virginia farmer who reported himself as being eighty-four years of age. He was

mounted on an old skeleton of a horse, and as we rode along he pointed us to the ruin that war had wrought on his farm of one thousand acres. The fences were nearly all destroyed, groves of trees were cut down, and a Baptist church, fifty by sixty feet, that he had built at his own expense and presented to the denomination, had been torn down so that hardly one brick remained upon another.

We accompanied the old man to his home, which is very pleasantly located, and now occupied by General Birney and his staff. From here we went to call on William H. Gilder,² chaplain of the 40th N. Y. We found the regiment located in a beautiful pine grove. The air was laden with balsamic perfume exhaled from the pine trees, and the whole place seemed to me one of the most delightful that I have seen in the State. We rode from here to take a look at the camp of the 19th Maine, which was quite a marvel in its way. The huts or quarters were for the most part built of split and hewed planks placed side by side in a perpendicular position. Some of them had doors and window casings that were quite ornamental. The streets were numbered, and as cleanly swept as the paths around a gentleman's country residence. Nearby was the hospital, surrounded by an enclosure of small pines set up in rows to imitate a growing hedge. It must be hard for men to go out from a place so pleasant to meet death on the battlefield.

March 10. Walked out this morning to the 7th Wisconsin regiment to distribute Testaments and papers. Soon after I commenced my work the rain began to fall, and I was compelled to retreat and seek a shelter. My half-brother, Elisha Dean, related to me, while we were together yesterday, an incident that deserves to be remembered. At a battle in Virginia a shot from one of the guns of the enemy tore off a limb of one of our soldiers. He was carried a little to the rear of our line, and left in a position that was very much exposed to the fire of the enemy. Elisha was passing him at a time when shots were flying thick and fast and saw an old and gray-haired man kneeling beside him engaged in prayer. Elisha said to him, "Old gentleman, you had better get out

²Father of Richard Watson Gilder.

of this place as quickly as possible." He barely opened his eyes, then closed them again and went on with his prayer. The old chaplain was Rev. T. P. Hunt, the famous temperance lecturer of other years.

March 11. The morning is very dull. Mr. Kingsbury, Brother Watkins' chum, being from home, Brother Watkins has charge of the culinary department of the tent. I wish our friends at home could see the arrangements for our morning meal. Owing to the rain, the only water we have to use is about the color of that which is found in the mud puddles in the vicinity of a brick yard. Mr. Watkins proposed that the potatoes should be boiled with the skins on, to which I assented. The only vessel in which they could be cooked was one in which rice was boiled yesterday, and it was suggested that the little rice that adhered to its sides would do no harm, so it was used without washing. Of butter we had none, but the bread was good, and we spread dried apple sauce on it, and got along very well. Our principal deficiency was a lack of something to drink, as we could not make up our minds to swallow the water, either in its natural state or when made into tea or coffee.

March 12. The weather is beautiful. Attended the funeral of a poor soldier who died in hospital. It was altogether a gloomy and forbidding occasion. Only twelve or fifteen of his comrades were present, and they seemed to be there rather as a matter of form than from interest in the services. His body was placed in an ambulance, carried away, and buried where, at best, there will be no more than a pine board to mark his grave.

A young man, member of the 19th Indiana, called at our rooms this morning. I had seen him before, and heard that he was a most exemplary Christian, and was interested in learning from his own lips something of his history, and of the consideration that induced him to enter the army. His father is a banker, in Indiana, and the young man (after having for some time taught school) was engaged in farming at the time when the war broke out. He began at once to consider whether it was not his duty to offer his services to his country. He thought and prayed over the subject for some

time, and at length, while at a campmeeting where he had been greatly blessed, decided that he would volunteer.

He enlisted, came out some two years and a half ago, and a few weeks since re-enlisted for three years more, or the war. He declares that he is perfectly satisfied that he is in the path of duty, and that he enjoys great peace of mind and sweet communion with God. He has never for a moment regretted the step he took, and said to me, "If the war lasts for ten years, I hope to see it out." I ask him what proportion of his regiment, in his judgment, entered the service from purely patriotic motives. He replied at once, "More than four-fifths, I am confident!" I also inquired of him whether he assented to the idea that more bad men are reformed in the army than there are good men who are led astray and corrupted by the temptations of camp life. He said that the notion was altogether erroneous, and in this I am confident he is correct.

Chaplains and agents of the Christian Commission are doing a good work in the army, but the place is full of moral peril to the young, and indeed to all men whose principles are not of the staunchest character. And with all the efforts of faithful chaplains and agents of the Christian Commission, the *mass* of the army is not reached by moral or religious influences.

Just at night Mr. Williams, Field Agent for the Commission, arrived at Culpeper and informed me that it was desirable that I should go to Brandy and preach at the headquarters of the army tomorrow. I put a few articles into a haversack and hurried off. The horse that I rode was a large and powerful animal, and as I did not care to be out late in this country and on a strange road, I gave him the birch and let him drive through the mud. The moon came up splendidly and I had a pleasant ride, in spite of the mud, until I came within the limits of Brandy. There the lights and the noise of the engine frightened my horse and he snorted and pranced till I began to fear that he might land me in the mud. But I kept my seat, and after a little delay reached my quarters in safety, where I found all that I needed for my comfort ex-

cept water that was fit to drink. Of that I could not obtain a drop for love or money.

Sunday, March 13. Went out this morning to preach at the headquarters of General Meade. He was absent in Washington, but General Patrick received me with great courtesy. The tent in which services were held was pleasantly located and neatly fitted up. The congregation numbered about one hundred, and listened with great attention. After service I was introduced to Dr. McParland, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, General Seth Williams and several other officers. Generals Patrick and Williams are both men of known reputations for piety. General Patrick, particularly, does not hesitate to talk on the subject of experimental religion whenever a proper opportunity offers. I went to his quarters and remained for an hour or two after service, and partook of a lunch that seemed more like home than anything I have seen since I left Brooklyn. I found General Patrick thoroughly posted with regard to everything pertaining to the army.

I was sorry to find that he fully confirmed suspicions that have been growing upon me ever since I came to Virginia with regard to the injudicious use that is made of much that is placed in the hands of the Sanitary Commission. He assured me that the army is so abundantly provided with food and clothing by the government that *any* addition to this supply under ordinary circumstances is not only useless but pernicious. The soldiers' rations are now *one-third* larger in quantity (to say nothing of value) than they were in the time of the Florida War. General Patrick said he was satisfied that there is now such a surplus of food in this army that enough is wasted month by month to feed twenty thousand men. An agent of the Sanitary Commission at Culpeper had told me that when a soldier is sent to the hospital he is allowed to draw one extra blanket, and that this is his only supply, except as he is furnished by the Sanitary Commission. I learned from General Patrick that physicians in charge of hospitals are at liberty to draw all the blankets that they need for the comfort of their patients, and not only blankets but other articles of bedding and clothing. General Patrick did

not hesitate to affirm that, of his own knowledge, a large part of the goods and articles of luxury sent to the Sanitary Commission are drawn and used by officers who have no legitimate claim to them.

After the close of our meeting, I went out to one of the colored camps where they were singing and praying. I never listen to these people without being impressed with the simplicity, wisdom, and faith that are seen through all their exercises. One of them in his prayer said in a subdued and tender tone of voice, "O Lord, it 'pears to us dat we are walking on the very edge of ruin. We looks dis way, and dat way, and in de rare, and we sees no way to 'scape and 'cept you help us we must be destroyed. Please, Lord, do help us. We never tink, O Lord, dat you help us because we're good, but just 'cause you loves us."

March 14. The last night was very windy, and the sides and top of our tent flapped like the sails of a vessel in a storm. But I suspended a sutler's blanket about my head so as to keep out the wind and slept comfortably.

March 16. Loaded myself down with books and papers this morning, and walked a couple of miles out of town to distribute them among some companies of sharpshooters. Kept at my work till between one and two o'clock, when my supply of reading matter was exhausted. Found the men generally intelligent and ready to engage in conversation. In one tent had a long and friendly talk with four young men who were engaged in card playing. In another, where I was distributing papers, one of the men asked me to have a paper for one his comrades who was absent on picket duty, enforcing his request by the remark that he was a good man and fond of reading. On expressing my satisfaction at hearing such a testimony concerning their companion, one present said: "If there is a Christian in the world, our comrade is one. We knew him at home, and everybody had perfect confidence in him there, and since he has been here his life has been without fault."

In another quarters I found four or five soldiers all of whom professed to be followers of the Saviour. They spoke modestly, but with great decision, of their faith in Christ,

and said that an oath had never been sworn, nor a pack of cards seen in their tent from the beginning of the war. Preached in the evening to a congregation numbering about ninety.

March 17. Preached in the evening to a congregation of about one hundred at the church. They gave excellent attention, and nine arose for prayers. Tarried after service to have conversation with some of the penitents. Was most interested in the case of a young man from Indiana, who tonight asked prayers for the first time. I think he will soon find the way of peace. But few of the Brooklyn 14th were present. Today is Saint Patrick's day, and the officers and men of this regiment have many of them been out of town at a horse race and in other places of dissipation.

March 18. Loaded up this morning with books and papers, and walked out to the 6th Wisconsin regiment. Found the men willing to converse on religious subjects, and eager to receive my papers and books. Met with two or three low-bred and ill-mannered officers, lieutenants and captains, who declined to receive what I had to offer. I observe since I have been here that it is the officers of a low grade who take on airs and get themselves up with magnificence. I noticed on last Sabbath, in preaching at headquarters, that the generals are plain in appearance and modest in their bearing. It was the lieutenants and captains that wore straw-colored kids.

March 19. Was up early this morning and wrote a letter to my wife which I sent to Brooklyn by Private Baker of the 14th. Ever since yesterday afternoon we have been a good deal stirred by rumors of rebel advances. Once the orders came to pick up everything preparatory to a march; this after an hour or two was countermanded. Orders came this morning at one o'clock for female visitors to retire from the army, and large numbers of them, the wives and friends of officers, left by the train at half past eight. It is well that they are gone, for women are a nuisance in the army.

In order that I might not forget or misrepresent facts on my return home, I this morning made further inquiries with regard to the quantity of food furnished by the government to our soldiers. The only fault to be found seems to be that

so much is provided that the men become extravagant and wasteful. It is certain that while *in camp* they have more than enough. Mr. Thompson, one of our delegates, has charge of commissary affairs at the rooms of the Christian Commission. We have had from four to eight in family ever since I came here. We have coffee of an excellent quality twice a day, and as our water is bad we all of us drink pretty strongly. All the coffee we have used during this time has been *given* Mr. Thompson by *three* privates of a Pennsylvania regiment, who had saved it from their supply drawn from the quartermaster of their regiment.

Mr. Thompson tells me that the men of this single regiment would freely give him a *bushel* of this same coffee if he would accept it, or could make any use of it. The soldiers are not allowed to send anything of the kind outside the lines of the army, and really know not what to do in many cases with their superfluous provisions. Mr. Thompson came in one day with his haversack filled with rice that had been given him.

Sunday, March 20. Yesterday afternoon Mr. Williams returned from Brandy with the information that I was needed to preach this morning at General Meade's headquarters. I accordingly got on a freight car and rode to Brandy where I spent the night. In the evening I attended a meeting at the quarters of the contrabands.

I was struck by the prayer of one of them, who, after dwelling on their troubles, said, "Please, Lord, don't leave us, please, Lord, don't leave us!" and I feel sure that he will not, for if any people know how to pray these do. One of them, in speaking to me on this subject said, "Black men are bound to pray; if they don't, what's gwine to become of them?" Uncle Dick in an exhortation told his people that "only one prayer after all is needed, and that is that the Lord's will may be done." Another, in relating his experience, said, "Bredren, I have found out that there is no doin' power in me." Another said that he had found it a "glorious thing" to believe in Jesus.

Uncle Ben becomes at times very dramatic in his manner, and so excited that there is something strangely weird in his appearance. I heard him on Saturday evening describe the

crucifixion, and in doing so he mingled the evangelical narrative with the coinage of his own imagination in a manner quite equal to anything in the sermons of Corbitt and Company. He represented the man who pierced the side of the Saviour as being "old and blind," whose eyes were opened by the blood that spirted into his face.³

In the morning I took horse and rode to General Patrick's headquarters. He seemed very glad to see me, and informed me that General Meade wished to see me at his quarters. We, General Patrick and myself, called on General Williams, and we all went together to General Meade's tent. I found him looking in better health and spirits than when I saw him two or three weeks ago. He entered very freely into conversation with me which extended through about an hour, and in which he showed himself a well-informed and agreeable gentleman. Afterward we went to the chapel tent, and I preached to a very attentive congregation of about one hundred.

I took occasion while at headquarters to make particular inquiry with regard to the operations of the Sanitary Commission. The conclusion to which I was forced after hearing statements from Generals Meade, Williams, and Patrick was, that there is no way in which the Sanitary Commission can use any considerable amount of money so as to benefit our soldiers while they are in health or in winter quarters. The representations to which we have listened at home are not in accordance with the facts we find to exist here in Virginia. After preaching, I lunched with General Patrick and he sent a driver and ambulance to take me to the headquarters of General Birney, a distance of three or four miles. A mounted orderly accompanied us, or rather rode in advance of the ambulance, partly to show the way, and partly for the sake of keeping up appearances. The thing savors of ostentation to an extent that makes it distasteful to a plain Methodist preacher.

I found a large congregation (some six hundred in a temple or amphitheater built of logs, and many on the outside), to which I preached a plain and faithful sermon in rather a cold and dry manner. After service I rode with Mrs. General

³Editor's Note: This story is by no means an invention of the Negro preacher, but was universally current in the middle ages. See Peebles, "The Legend of Longinus in Ecclesiastical Tradition."

Birney and several staff officers to the house at which they reside for the present. I was introduced to General Birney, who invited me to spend the night with him, and treated me with other marks of politeness. He is in person tall and slim, with light hair and a light complexion. He has a fine forehead and eye, and is on the whole the best looking man I have seen in the army. I was furnished with a horse (and the everlasting orderly, of course), and rode over to Culpeper.

March 21. This morning I borrowed a horse of Colonel Fowler and accompanied by Captain McClure rode to the front and ascended Cedar Mountain. At this point the government has a signal station that looks over into Secessia. Several of their camps are visible to the naked eye, and by the aid of a glass I saw some of the rebel soldiers on picket duty and ten or a dozen of them engaged in playing ball. The pickets of the two armies are here about two miles apart. In coming to this place we passed close by the battlefield of Cedar Mountain (or Slaughter's Mountain), where General Banks fought with Stonewall Jackson, and was compelled to retreat, if he did not suffer a positive defeat. I found the ride so fatiguing that on coming down from the mountain I took the cars for Culpeper, and had the orderly lead back the horse I borrowed of Colonel Fowler.

March 22. Left Culpeper at 8 o'clock this morning for Washington, which place we reached at 2 o'clock. Here we remained for only a few hours, and then passed on to Baltimore, where we spent the night with Mr. Watkins's father. Had a good night's sleep in a good clean bed for the first time for almost four weeks.

March 23. Left Baltimore at 9:20 and reached Philadelphia at about one o'clock. Called at the rooms of the Christian Commission, and had a conversation with Mr. Stuart with regard to the condition of things in the army. He is a whole-souled man, and enthusiastic with regard to the doings of the Christian Commission. His qualifications are just such as are needed in his position, but from his constitutional peculiarities it is inevitable that he should take sanguine views of what the Commission is accomplishing.

The result of all the observations I have been able to make while in the army is:

1. A profound conviction of the great importance of the work in which the Commission is engaged. In my judgment there is no moral enterprise of the age that has a stronger claim upon the Christians of America. The *great want* of the Army of the Potomac is evangelical efforts to save the souls of the soldiers. I am convinced:

2. The reports that are made of the fruit already gathered in this field are a good deal exaggerated. The delegates, in their desire to give a good account of their labors, are constantly liable to overcolor their statements. I do not mean to intimate that they intend to deceive, but such is human nature, even when sanctified, that one has need to receive the reports of revivals at home, and as they are published in the religious newspapers, with some allowance. God bless the Christian Commission; it is engaged in a good work.

THE END.

ROBERT MILLER HATFIELD.